



By

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I joined Blink two years ago when they first decided to expand to San Diego. At the time, Blink had about 65 consultants in Seattle plus the four of us in San Diego. Two years later, Blink now has five studios and more than 150 consultants.

In San Diego, we've grown to a 13-person team and have moved out of a co-working space and into a gorgeous studio located in the heart of East Village. Our studio has previously been home to Telepathy, HIVE Co-Working, and Red Door Interactive.

We were lucky to move into a furnished office which let our team get right to work. Over the past two years though, we have made a lot of small improvements such as painting the bathrooms, updating the kitchen, and building a new storage room. We also constructed two [user research labs](#).

Making these improvements has been a fun challenge and helped us feel even more at home. The building has lots of natural charm thanks to antique windows, exposed brick, and a sort of industrial rustic vibe. We worked to retain the character of the building while providing our team the kind of quiet, private space required for rigorous research.

The history of our building

We moved into our [San Diego studio](#) on Jan 1, 2017. The building, now known as the [Neuhaus Ateliers](#), was originally constructed in 1932 for the Pacific Library Binding Company of Los Angeles. The company repaired and rebound books to make them more durable for library circulation.



Blink San Diego is located at 770 11th Ave. in the heart of East Village just a few blocks from PETCO park.

It seems fitting that our workspace used to be occupied by a company responsible for constructing high-quality products, intended to be easy to use, and built with integrity. That's what we do, too.



UX consultants prepare concept cards for an upcoming workshop on the mezzanine level of our San Diego design studio.

A tour of our facility

Our studio has three separate office suites. Each suite has polished concrete floors and a steel mezzanine that provides extra usable space for us.

UX design studio

The main suite is 6,000 square feet and is flooded with natural light. There is a comfortable lounge area at the front of the studio. Research participants and other visitors are welcome to explore the lounge which is filled with custom-made furniture and includes a gallery of local art. The lounge is also a great space for collaboration or happy hours.



Organizers from SD Design Trek pose for a photo after a debriefing meeting. Not pictured: Craft beers.

There are four conference rooms with different themes, which we inherited from the previous tenant and liked so much that we haven't really changed them. Each of our conference rooms is equipped with two high-definition TVs and Mac Minis which work perfectly for sharing our work with clients over Zoom.



Four of our eclectic conference rooms.

We also have an area we call “the theater,” which has an 86” television and seating for 50. This area is perfect for meetups and professional associations. To top it all off, we have a full kitchen and an open patio. During the Interaction19 Redux event this summer, we hosted more than 100 guests to a cookout in this space.



Interaction19 Redux attendees enjoy a cookout and happy hour inside the Blink San Diego studio.

User research labs

Our major improvement to this space is two 18'x20' usability labs which are insulated for sound and wrapped in corrugated steel to evoke the idea of a shipping container. The labs are hard-wired to our observation suites and equipped with broadcast-grade streaming capabilities so our clients can watch research sessions from anywhere in the world with an internet connection. The rooms are large enough to conduct focus groups and customizable so they can be used for in-home simulations, medical device testing, or 1-on-1 usability studies.



A study participant uses an application while a researcher observes and takes notes.

The labs take up 700 square feet of the office. We were able to reclaim that usable space by making the new structure load-bearing. So, in addition to the two usability labs, we've added two "project rooms" — collaboration spaces that our teams can reserve for weeks, or even months, at a time with no pressure to erase the whiteboards. These spaces are perfect for coming together to solve tough problems and conduct critiques.



Photo courtesy of SDXD. Participants in the Interview Olympics show off their whiteboarding skills in the (unfinished at the time) collaboration zone on top of the user research labs.

Observation rooms

Our second and third suites are primarily for client interactions. Each of these suites is accessible directly from the street, has ample collaboration space, a conference room setup which includes two high-definition TVs, and web conference capabilities.

We use the downstairs area for collaborative workshops. There is lounge seating, rolling whiteboards, and we change the desk arrangement to suit a variety of activities such as card sorting or continuum plotting.



Creative director, Jorge Hernandez, conducts a workshop with students from the Innovation Lab at La Jolla Country Day School in the downstairs space of one of our observation suites.

The upstairs is perfect for observing research sessions. The dual TV setup allows observers to view multiple camera angles at the same time. The rooms comfortably seat 12 people in a conference setup or eight people in a classroom setup. We also keep plenty of supplies for collaboration.



Researchers and clients observe a participant using an interactive prototype.

Come see for yourself

Please [get in touch with us](#) to schedule a private tour and learn how Blink can help you.